

Explore the Paint Mines Interpretive Park!

**Park is open from dawn to dusk
seven days a week**



Take Highway 24 to Calhan, go south on Yoder Road/Calhan Highway, turn east on Paint Mine Road, and follow the signs.

Relentless prairie winds, sandstone-capped spires and hoodoos, colorful hues of clay, and distant coyote calls beckon visitors to this quiet landscape. As hikers venture from the trailhead into the distant reaches, the Paint Mines offers a journey through time, past fascinating geological formations and remnants of human history, in a unique ecological setting within the rolling plains of eastern El Paso County.



Prairie Grasslands

The Paint Mines are dominated by clays deposited more than 55 million years ago, and the surrounding acreage has yielded evidence of human life dating as far back as 9,000 years. American Indian tribes used this land as a favorite hunting ground where badland breaks and gullies may have served as hunting overlooks and entrapment locations for bison kill.



A View from Above

The colorful clays were used for making pottery and ceremonial paint, and in the early 1900s, the clay was mined to make bricks. During the 1880s, settlers began to homestead these lands. Grazing and agricultural use by long-time local residents, the Freeman family and others, played an important role in the Paint Mines' history.



Outdoor Adventure

The diversity of plant communities (short-grass prairie, mid-grass prairie, mixed-grass prairie, shrublands, wetlands, and riparian drainage) makes this open space an attractive place for both humans and wildlife. Blue grama and buffalo grass dominate the prairie landscape where abundant seasonal wildflowers cast multiple splashes of vibrant color across this seemingly barren land.



Prairie Wildflowers

The Paint Mines Interpretive Park, located in Colorado's eastern prairie, is a rare, geologically fragile, and ecologically rich landscape of labyrinthine gulches and monoliths, perennial wetlands, and native grass meadows. The park contains unique geological, archeological, historical, and ecological resources that are all interrelated, thereby retaining significant educational, scientific, and interpretive value.



Massive Hoodoos

Red fox and mule deer are common, and pronghorn may be seen occasionally in the distance. Throughout the park, western meadowlarks and rock wrens serenade from nearby, prairie falcons and ferruginous hawks soar high above, and short-horned lizards scurry through nooks and crannies, adding delight to our adventures and providing memories that last a lifetime.

The Paint Mines' ecology represents the connection among all elements of the park. The geologic formations create natural drainages abundant with wetland and riparian habitat. This fragile environment requires many years for nature to restore it once the vegetation and soil have been damaged. Plants, wildlife, rocks, minerals, and historic artifacts are protected by law.



Memories That Last a Lifetime



Enjoy the Paint Mines!